

The CIA on Campus

When the Central Intelligence Agency was established in 1947, the principle of cooperation between the CIA and higher education seemed self-evident: The agency benefited from the advice of academic experts; scholars could influence government policy in matters of interest and concern. Just as Congress solicits expert opinion, or the Pentagon offers research contracts, the CIA combed the groves of academe for information, insight, basic knowledge and specialized talent.

But the years passed, and with them the notion that the interests of government and higher education were compatible. The Vietnam War aggravated the estrangement. In some academic circles, the CIA was in deep disfavor, and the breach grew progressively wider until it was complete.

It is fatuous to suppose that the interests of the CIA are always inimical to the purposes of higher education. The CIA is not a state within a state but an instrument of foreign policy. Of all people, scholars should have recognized that making a pariah of the CIA was not likely to change the thinking, or even challenge the assumptions, of American policy-makers.

In a more practical sense, the CIA was deprived of some useful points of view. Some of the most pertinent criticism of American policy in recent years has centered on the absence of reliable information from certain critical places in the world.

That is why the Carter administration, in

the person of CIA Director Stansfield Turner, sought to re-establish diplomatic relations between the agency and the universities. The Reagan administration has strengthened those ties, and its efforts are welcome provided the CIA doesn't recruit professors to be spies.

The process has not been easy, or without controversy. The director of Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies was recently compelled to resign his post because he had accepted \$45,000 from the CIA last year to help finance a conference on Islamic fundamentalism. He hadn't informed the scholars he invited to the conference of the CIA subsidy and failed to follow the policy established by the university on such subsidies accepted by faculty members.

Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., a longtime critic of the CIA, has called on the agency to publicize its contracts with universities, and demanded that universities disavow their associations with the CIA.

There is nothing wrong in the CIA's seeking scholarly information where it can be found. Mr. Edwards' call for severance of ties between the CIA and campuses makes little sense.

The principles of academic freedom would demand that scholars be free to advise the CIA or engage in subsidized research. They, not Congress, should decide whether their work is tainted or their services constitute a conflict of interest.